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SECRET SPY CENTRES REVEALED

Unions protest at GCHQ stations

By MAURICE WEAVER Industrial Staff

A COMPREHENSIVE list of the seven main Government intelligence outstations in Britain, whose functions were previously regarded as secret, was issued last night by the Council of Civil Service Unions.

It is part of the council's campaign of opposition to the trade union ban affecting the Cheltenham-based spy network and is intended to inform journalists of a programme of planned protest meetings.

While publication of the list of outstations was regarded with dismay by the security authorities—who are increasingly horrified at the limelight being shed on their operations—there was a widespread feeling among MPs on both sides of the House and within the unions that this was an inevitable result of the controversy over the ban on unions at GCHQ, Cheltenham.

The news release gave details of a programme of meetings of staff affected by the union ban, the first security reasons for speaking out publicly against the move.

Officials of the Council of Civil Service Unions, who are determined to pursue a "clean" campaign against the Government's policy of this kind, said the list might cause unease about the decision of their Press Office to put out the list.

First public

identification

A Foreign and Commonwealth Office spokesman said it was time that these outstations had been publicly identified in this way.

Most of them are fairly unexceptional in appearance and have traditionally cherished their anonymity.

The outstations named are: Culmhead in Cornwall; Cheadle, Staffs; Bletchley, Bucks; Scarborough, Yorks; Hawklaw, Fife; Brora in Sutherland; and Bude, Cornwall.

Most are believed to lead material direct to Cheltenham for analysis and, if necessary, decoding.

One of these locations, that revealed in the Commons during the day by Mr Dennis Skinner, the Left-wing Labour MP for Beloe, was Bletchley.

Mr Skinner complained during Commons exchanges about the exclusion of trade unions that a local union official at Cheadle had been banned for

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security reasons for speaking out publicly against the move. Officials of the Council of Civil Service Unions, who are determined to pursue a "clean" campaign against the Government's policy of this kind, said the list might cause unease about the decision of their Press Office to put out the list.

But Mr Peter Jones, secretary of the council, said: "It was the Government who started this hare running and the blame for such occurrences must inevitably be laid at their door."

Mr Jones said the six civil service unions involved had members at the locations named whose interests it was their duty to protect.

"They were affected by the 'no unions' ruling and protest meetings would be called."

"Once you get into this kind of business there is no way you can control it," he asserted.

"As unions we have been trying desperately from the start to act responsibly under considerable provocation from the Government."

"We have made it plain that we don't know how many people are employed at Cheltenham and we don't know what many of our members there actually do."

"I do know where some of the overseas outstations are, and wild horses wouldn't drag it out of me."

"But in this case we have

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Spy centres revealed

people in British places of work relying on us to protect their interests.

"Winning public support is part of that process so we have to have local meetings to get our message across."

Tory defends

union action

Mr John Goff (C, Hendon N.), a member of the Select Committee on Employment and a critic of the Government's handling of the Cheltenham affair, last night expressed the view that the union action was "perfectly legitimate."

He said: "If their members in these outstations had not been directly affected by the ruling it would have been a different matter."

"But as they are, it seems to me they are perfectly justified in doing what they have."

"If people's trade union rights are being removed, then it is perfectly legitimate that we should know from where those rights are being removed."

At yesterday's mass meeting in Cheltenham's Pitville Pump Rooms, about 750 staff from the town's two Communications Headquarters establishments were told that Tuesday, Feb. 28 had been designated as a "Day

of Action" throughout the Civil Service in protest at the ban.

But the Council of Civil Service Unions later emphasised that this would not be an all-out stoppage, but more likely a series of spontaneous rallies, walk-outs and protest meetings nationwide.

A Parliamentary lobby by union members is planned for February 29.

The Government has nominated March 1 as the "deadline" for civil servants at GCHQ to sign the option form acquiescing to the withdrawal of their union rights and accepting the £1,000 compensation offer.